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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4362  
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 8343  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 0924  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ AUG LIMA 6492  
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 2204  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 7177  
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 4552

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 003133

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SOCI](#) [CO](#)  
SUBJECT: GOC DIALOGUE WITH MEDIO MAGDALENA COMMUNITY

REF: A. BOGOTA 902  
[1](#)B. BOGOTA 794  
[1](#)C. BOGOTA 3077

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer  
For Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

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SUMMARY  
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[1](#)1. (U) The GOC continues dialogue with human rights, civic and Catholic Church leaders in the Medio Magdalena region through the Inter-sectorial Commission for Life (CIV), a public forum created in 2003 to promote communications between the GOC and human rights groups in the highly polarized, violent region. Vice President Francisco Santos, together with numerous local, regional and national leaders, gave updates on investigations into human rights abuses. The human rights groups noted their concerns about impunity, threats, and collusion among local leaders, police and military with illegal armed groups. They asked that all criminal investigations be moved to the central Prosecutor General's Office (Fiscalia) in Bogota to avoid interference by corrupt local officials. End summary.

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HUMAN RIGHTS DIALOGUE CONTINUES  
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[1](#)2. (U) The GOC began the formal dialogue with the CIV in 2003 in response to complaints by human rights, civic and Catholic Church leaders about political violence in the Medio Magdalena region, impunity, and collusion between GOC security forces and paramilitaries (see reftel a). Although the CIV did not meet in 2004-2005, it was reactivated in [1](#)2006. This was the second meeting of the CIV this year--the first was on April 1, 2008. Organizers told us the CIV plans to meet three times a year.

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PROGRESS ON PROSECUTIONS  
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[1](#)3. (U) After welcoming remarks by Vice President Santos, Fiscalia Human Rights Director Sandra Castro and local prosecutors in the Medio Magdalena region began a case-by-case report on the status of investigations of homicides and threats in the region. Castro explained the expedited processes for human rights cases, noting her monthly meetings with regional prosecutors to create specific monthly work plans. Due to these work plans, investigations were moving at a quicker pace. The Cartagena Regional Prosecutor's Office noted that both the physical and intellectual authors of the high-profile Miguel Daza murder

had been charged and arrested. The local Barrancabermeja Prosecutor's Office noted that in many cases, witnesses refuse to testify. They have no resolved cases. They mentioned that the investigations of threats against local human rights groups, including Yolanda Becerra from the Popular Women's Organization (OFP - see reftel b), are on-going.

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BUT CORRUPTION AND HOMICIDES CONTINUE  
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14. (SBU) The Regional Corporation for the Defense of Human Rights (CREDHOS) representative asked that the Fiscalía transfer all investigations, including threats, to the central human rights unit in Bogota to avoid interference by corrupt local officials. The Peasant Association of the Cimitarra River Valley (ACVC) voiced concern about the constant presence and taxation of peasants by paramilitaries and other illegal armed groups. They noted that some local authorities support or tolerate these groups, and accused security forces of arbitrarily detaining peasant leaders. He noted that homicides in Barranca average 2 a week. The 47 homicides so far this year were 10 more than were committed in all of 2007. The Petroleum Workers' Union (USO) noted that many homicides committed over 10 years ago against unionists had still not been resolved--they voiced concern that GOC officials still link the USO with the ELN.  
BROWNFIELD